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Camp and Cottage

Lyman H. Sproull.

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CAMP AND COTTAGE.

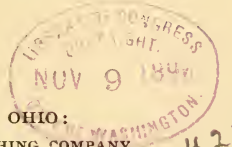
CAMP AND COTTAGE.

POEMS

. . . BY . .

LYMAN H. SPROULL,

AUTHOR OF "HOURS AT HOME."



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BY
LYMAN H. SPROULL.

PREFACE.

THERE are many kind, true and appreciative hearts in the camps and cottages of the Rockies, whose friendly faces brighten the rugged desolation of the mountain trail, the monotony of the secluded ranch, and the gloominess of the chambered mine. It is among these that the author lives and labors; it is in the daily lives of these that he sees the joys and sorrows which he strives to portray; and it is to these that he respectfully dedicates his book.

L. H. S.

CRIPPLE CREEK, COLO., July, 1896.

CONTENTS.

At the Mine, ... 7
The Playmates, ... 9
The Boy Brave, ... 11
In the Cabin, ... 12
The Spider and the Bee, ... 14
At the Mouth of the Cañon, ... 16
The Sculptor, ... 17
On the Peak, ... 20
A Ranchman's Troubles, ... 21
Before the Storm, ... 22
Struck for Cake, ... 23
In Camp, ... 28
The Morning Hour, ... 30
A Boy's Balloon, ... 31
A Pack of Winds, ... 33
Visiting, ... 35
In the Mood, ... 38
A Domestic Storm, ... 39
Death of the Ivy, ... 40
After Sunset, ... 42
Mountain Daisies, ... 43
Reminiscences, ... 44
Finale, ... 48

CAMP AND COTTAGE.

AT THE MINE.

When the cold and piercing fingers
Of the sunset points and lingers
Thro' the sombre clumps of pinions
That are scattered round the mine,
I come up to watch the dying
Of the wintry sunset, lying
On the cold and snowy backbone
Of the Continental line.

There I see the broken edges
Of the mountain chain which hedges
The precipitous dominion
Of that bright aërial bay;
See the frowning night which arches
O'er the spear-like points of torches
Standing wake-like o'er the hidden
Head of the departed day.

Now the night is gently hov'ring
Low and lower, softly cov'ring
All the broken land in darkness,
  While its western wing is bright
With the less'ning glow, which falters
Faintly on the snowy altars
Of the ranges, disappearing
  In the mystic hold of night.

Here I tarry till the twilight
Gathers on the arching sky-light,
Hung with thin and vapory curtains
  Waving in the frosty dome;
And the fairy hands have driven
All the starry spikes in heaven,
While the echoes thro' the mountains
  Tell my tired soul of home.

THE PLAYMATES.

Once some little sunbeams strayed
To a nest,
Where a downy fledgling gazed
At the visitors, amazed
At their softness as they played
On the leafy twiglets woven
Round her breast.

And they chattered all together,
All together, all together,
In a wild and joyous ecstacy of fun;
And the one loved the many,
And the many praised the one;
As the weather courts the feather,
To uphold her
In the beaming and esteeming
Of the sun.
There she flapped her tiny wings,
List'ning to the many things
Which they told her.

When 'twas even, still they tarried
In their playmate's leafy bower;
Some half covered and half buried
In the shadows which were carried
Onward by the passing hour;
And they would not leave until
From the distant sunset hill
They were quickly called away
By the day.

Then they left their playmate hid
Deep the rustling leaves amid,
While a dream-like murmur lingered
On her brain,
Which resembled in its calling
Much the elfin music, falling
From the leafy organs fingered
By the rain.
But in whisp'ring their farewell
To this little birdie belle,
They told her they would come again,
And come again they did.

THE BOY BRAVE.

Bedecked in his bright eagle feather,
  Which waved o'er the brow of the brave,
He emerged thro' the soft, hazy weather,
  And took to his boat on the wave;
    And paddled away—away—
    In the shade of the fast falling day,
In the stern of his little canoe.

The sunset grew softer and softer,
  And smiled on the watery scroll.
I shaded my eyes and looked after
  This free, unapproachable soul;
    And I saw but a speck on the crest
    Of the lakelet afar to the west,
Where he rowed in his little canoe.

IN THE CABIN.

Night is stealing up the creeks,
And his breath is cold and damp;
Day is fading from the peaks—
Shut the door and light the lamp.

Let the pale and ghostly wane
Of the moon adown the even,
Glimmer on our door again
With the straggling stars of heaven.

Let the prowling wind arise
With a shriek of wild appall,
Till the frowning midnight skies
Throw a darkness over all.

Let the tumbling creeks fall down
In the darkness and the gloom,
With their echoing voices blown
Through the cañon's rocky room.

Let that sad, prolonging howl
  Of a coyote vagabond
Echo 'neath the heaven's scowl,
  Dying on the cliffs beyond.

These will fill our hearts tonight
  With such wild enchanting dreams
Of the mountains, while the light
  O'er each quiet sleeper streams.

THE SPIDER AND THE BEE.

Now, here is a story—I heard it in camp—
'Twas told by a jovial, meanderous scamp,
And it may be all right, and it may be but *boo*,
But I'm half-way inclined to believe it is true.

There once was a cowboy, A. Spider by name,
Who made a good living by lassoing game;
While not far away there roamed, fearless and free,
A steer which the people had christened D. Bee.

"Ho, ho!" shouted Spider; "a whopper, by Jim!
I'll just have a hand-to-hand tussle with him!"
So up to D. Bee, Spider went on a lope,
Hopped off his bronco, with flexible rope,
And threw it quite cunningly round D. Bee's ear,
But got his foot in it much worse than the steer.

They both came together in battle array,
And D. Bee proved the High-muck-a-muck of
the day,
For he stabbed him with something—he didn't
know what,—
But Spider climbed onto his pony and got!
Nor tarried henceforth on his side of the fence,
And he hasn't done anything notable since.

AT THE MOUTH OF THE CAÑON.

'Tis here the cañon rears its gate,
To wonder-lands of mystery;
'Tis here the hurried waters wait
For rest from off their high estate,
Ere journeying onward to the sea.

The morning sun beams o'er the plains
From broken cliff-lines in the east:
Smiles o'er the scattered herds and flocks,
And falling on these mossy rocks,
Looks up a yawning gulf of mist.

THE SCULPTOR.

From the marble depths of the Great Unknown,
The quarry-men lifted the pure white stone,
Which a sculptor bought
With his gold, and brought
To a dingy shop, where he planned and wrought
An image from it, unseen, alone.

The curtains were drawn but the folks could hear
A chip, chip, chip, that was near and clear;
And they said, "Oh, what
Has the old man got
Which keeps him so close to that dreary spot,
With a world so bright and so sunny near?"

But the curtains raised and the neighbors viewed
The head and the shoulders, pure and nude,
Of a maiden fair
With her flowing hair,

Carved out from the stone with the greatest
care,
And they all exclaimed in a breath, "Who
could?"

They entered the shop where the old man sat
As still as death in his old slouch hat,
And asked, "What face
Have you sought to trace
That beams so full of the love and grace
Which we see outlined in the work of that?"

The old man raised neither hand nor head,
And gave no heed to the words they said;
And they touched his old
Thin hand, so cold,
Which the pitiful end of the sculptor told,
And they started back, for the man was dead!

There looking down like a dreamy one,
In the marble dust with the chippings strewn,
He seemed to say,
In a silent way,
To a crumpled picture which near him lay,
They will know you now by the work I've
done.

She has long been gone—so the people say—
And from early dawn to the close of day,
This old man roved
Through the world unloved,
By the joys and the griefs of the world unmoved,
With his mind on a face that had passed away.

So the daughter's face, it was brought to light,
By her father's hand, by her father's might;
But the old thin one
That the work had done
Was gone like the light of a day-spent sun,
To sleep unseen thro' eternal night.

ON THE PEAK.

The wintry sun hangs blear and low,
And red the light is on the snow.

I hear the whisp'ring winds go by,
And mingle in the upper sky.

Far, far below, the little town
Darkens with night, descending down;

While treetops still remain aglow
With arrows glancing o'er the snow.

Those granite needles, tipped with fire,
Grow darker as the beams retire.

The distant landscapes fade away,
In beauty, with the dying day;

Yet lingering, tremulous and weak,
The last faint ray illumes the peak.

A RANCHMAN'S TROUBLES.

That savage river on its way
  Has swiped the profits of my ranch,
And soon along with other clay
  'Twill start the dread malarial stench.
'Tis "robbing Peter to pay Paul,"
  And these 'ere hills will peter out,
If still continues constant fall
  Of hail, and rain, and water-spout.

Last week's alfalfa blooms were fine;
  But who could ever calculate
That they'd be salted in the brine
  Of every whirlpool in the state?
And out from every cañon wall—
  Now that the water's had its fun—
Comes bears and bugaboos—beats all
  What man can see without a gun.

My cow looks at me in despair
  And moans for more alfalfa hay—
Her baby went to feed a bear,—
  Now what in conscience can I say?
For all on earth that's left us now
  Are those big rocks you see up there;
And they're no good for man or cow,
  And only kind o' forts for bear.

BEFORE THE STORM.

From peak to peak the daylight dies ;
From rock to rock the darkness lies ;
While on the hill a coyote's cries
Are mingling with the wind, which sighs
About his shaggy form.

A miner on his homeward trail,
Harks to the wind and coyote's wail,
And glancing at the clouds which sail
Above the snowy range so pale,
He prophesies a storm.

Oh, what a scene when day is dying,
And night about the rocks is lying ;
While on the hill the coyote's crying
Is mingling with the wind's sad sighing,
Desolate, forlorn !

A tired miner homeward trailing,
Harks to the wind and coyote's wailing,
And gazes at the snow-caps sailing
Above the distant range, fast paling—
Paling into storm.

STRUCK FOR CAKE.

One day my playmate Jack and I,
Upon a sloping hill hard by
Our village home, with wagons new,
Were rolling down with wild halloo,
Directly past our neighbor's door,
Where oft we'd dashed along before.

Now Jack was on his downward ride,
With dust-clouds rolling at his side,
When veering from our usual course,
He struck the doorstep with a force
That spilt him out in dust and dirt,
And scratched his face, but not to hurt.

The inmates, startled by his cry,
Came out with many a "dear!" and
"my!"
And brushed his clothes with kindly beat,
And filled his hands with cookies sweet,
Till Jack forgot his tumble down,
And was the happiest boy in town.

Well now, thought I, if people like
Such things as that, I'll make a strike;
I'll hit that doorstep—have a fall—
Set up a loud, heart-rending bawl,
Until they come with "dears!" and
"mys!"
And dry the tears within my eyes,
And set me straight upon my feet,
And give me cake and cookies sweet,
Until with goodies I'm supplied,
And paid quite well for all I've cried.

Well, after all my plans were laid,
The boyish venture then I made.
Down, down the dusty hill I dashed,
Till on the street I fairly flashed,
And aimed for our good neighbor's door,
Where Jack had struck it rich before.

I hit the doorstep, as I meant,
And—as I didn't mean to—went
Like lightning through the open door,
Across the carpet on the floor!
A lady seated quietly,
Who was not then expecting me,
With brush in hand and many paints,

Was fixing land and sky with tints ;
But hitting her in my advance
I scattered easel, brush and paints.

I know it was not fair at all
That I should make her such a call ;
But nothing different could I do,
I'd started, and I must go through ;
So dashing on I left her there,
With colors scattered everywhere.

On through the open parlor door,
Into the kitchen with a roar,
I bounded in a single breath,
And scared the cook almost to death !
On through the kitchen door I shot
To open air and garden lot,
Where downward in my awful swoop,
I keeled a latticed chicken coop,
And in the shade of leafy trees,
Capsized a hive of busy bees.

The honey-workers filled the air,
And laid their plans for open war ;
Each sharped his rusty bayonet,
And used it, too, you'd better bet !

The chickens fled on every path
To miss the bees' increasing wrath ;
The cat, with tail erect from it,
Scaled high the fence with hiss and spit ;

The strutting dove with loving coo,
Postponed his song—abrubtly too ;
The watch-dog's stern, demanding growl,
Changed off into a dreadful howl ;
A pig, receiving pointers too,
From quarters which he little knew,
Set up a squeal and danced a jig
Becoming to a city pig !

Meanwhile the bees by bush and tree,
'Mong other things did not miss me ;
Some downward flew my toes to seek,
While others sailed to shoot my cheek ;
And one a-dashing wildly by
Sat down to rest above my eye ;
A dozen searched my back with care,
And ten got tangled in my hair.

The inmates gathered on the stoop,
To gaze on boy and hive and coop,
But as the bees spread out afar
To find new enemies to war,

They soon retreated through the door,
Where I could hear their shout and roar.
My still increasing, wild boohoo,
Brought out a hundred heads to view,
As pushing through the storm of bees,
But not by any slow degrees,
I dashed away for heaven's sake
And left without a blasted cake !

IN CAMP.

We are here tonight
'Neath the canvas white,
In the midst of these lonely hills ;
Where the windy sigh
Of the stormy sky,
Our hearts with a sadness fills.

The river moans
O'er the tumbled stones,
From the clefts of the cañons torn
By the hand of frost ;
While the peaks are lost
In the wings of a mountain storm.

We can hear the pelt,
On the canvas dealt,
Of the snow and the driven sleet ;
While our fancies rove
To the homes we love,
And the ones that we fain would meet.

Here under the roof
Of our water-proof,
We may dream of the valley land ;
Of the garden fair,
And the cottage there,
And the touch of a loved one's hand.

We may dream tonight
Of the nursery light,
And the ones we would die to save ;
Of the prayer said
By the baby's bed,
And the kiss which the mother gave ;

We may dream tonight
Of the cottage light,
Forgetting the dark and cold
Of the present place ;
And our eager race
Thro' these lonely lands for gold.

THE MORNING HOUR.

When the morning steals to the kingly tower,
The bell in the belfry proclaims the hour.

When it brushes the tips of the songsters' wings,
He opens his eyes to the day and sings.

When it reaches the peaks of the mountains high,
They smile in the light of the morning sky.

When it kisses the flower, so fair, so bright,
She bows her head to the welcome light.

When it falls on the lakelet far away,
It sparkles and sparkles, and all is day.

A BOY'S BALLOON.

With hammer, hatchet, saw, and nails,
I worked through all the noon,
With strings and wings like flapping sails,
To make a *real* balloon.
My mother watched and smiled at how
I worked beneath the sun;
But she has ceased her smiling now
At what the *thing* has done.

The bed-time came; I went to rest;
But through the window soon
I saw outlined against the west
My little white balloon;
And running to the window-sill,
I leaned far out in glee,
While through the ev'ning air so still
It floated up to me.

Then in its little basket frail
I clambered with a shout,
And gaily hoisting up my sail,
I through the blue struck out.
Above the trees, the evening breeze,
Above the cloudy bars,
I traveled with the greatest ease
To seek the lovely stars.

The moon hung o'er a silvery cloud
That barred the east afar,
While in its cup-like concave proud
There blazed a little star;
And higher, higher in the blue,
Enriched by starry bowers,
I quickly passed away from view
Of this wee world of ours.

Beneath the arch of milky-way
I soared to higher skies,
As if I neared the brilliant day
Of some sweet paradise.
A wind stirred with the coming light,
And I was tossed about,
Till all at once,—ah, dreadful plight!
My strings and wings gave out!

Down through the boundless blue I went,
Through clustering stars I tore,
Till earth's low-floating clouds I rent,
And landed—*on the floor!*
And looking round with startled stare
And bumped, bewildered head,
I found myself within a square
Of sunshine by my bed.

A PACK OF WINDS.

Now in and out at the open door
They stray and play
At their own sweet will;
I hear them now on the cabin floor,
And now on the brow
Of the rocky hill.

They fly to the cañons deep and lone,
And frisk and whisk
On the cold rocks there;
And then depart with a sweeping tone,
And wail and trail
Thro' the piñon's hair.

They go to the caves in the granite cliff,
And creep on the sleep
Of the darkness there;
Then leave with a growl and an angry sniff,
And stray away
In the evening air.

They scud to the peaks where the snow lies cold
And white and bright
In the sunset's ray;
And there they chant on the summit bold,
And grieve thro' eve
For the dying day.

And then in the morning, soft and still,
They lie and sigh
On the cabin floor;
Then in and out at their own sweet will,
They stray and play
Thro' the open door.

VISITING.

I am here a-visiting,
Visiting, visiting,
Guest of sweet and smiling Spring.
O'er the field and thro' the grove,
By the brooklet and the cove,
On the mountain's woody steep
Where the lovely daisies peep;
In the garden, thro' the corn,
You can hear me in the morn
When I perch myself to sing;
Visiting, visiting.

What will I do when the snows
And the savage norther blows?
Hurricane, hurricane!
I will fly away to where
All is summer in the air,
Visiting, visiting.
Thro' the bush and on the wing,
Where the cold and icy rain
And the maddened hurricane
Can not reach me while I sing;
Visiting, visiting.

MORNING.

The east is faintly smiling
With morn's approaching light,
While gliding through
Its banks of dew,
The brooklet sings of night.

Behold! on yonder mountain,
Majestic, cold and lone,
A rosy red
Has tipped the head
Of that aerial cone;

And while we view its splendor,
The lower ranges greet
The morning light;
While dying night
Lies silent at their feet.

Now on the rocky upland
We catch the morning beam;

Now, lower still,
Upon the hill
And on the rippling stream.

The daisy heads are peeping
From out each leafy awning;
And gliding through
Its banks of dew
The brooklet sings of morning.

IN THE MOOD.

It is summer in the mountains,
And the sun is on the trees,
And the breezes softly whisper
To the columbines—yet these,
So inviting to the senses,
Can not check the gloomy tread
Of my fancies thro' the winter
Of a land that's cold and dead.

It is winter in the mountains,
And the snow is on the peaks;
And the wind about the cañons
And the caverns raves and shrieks;
Yet my heart knows no misgiving,
And my fancies linger sweet
In a land of smiling summer,
With the flowers at their feet.

A DOMESTIC STORM.

He did not mean to be so rough;
  She did not mean the words she said;
But as it was, 'twas just enough
  To turn domestic heavens red,
And raise a whirlwind in the sky,
  Which ruffled their tranquility.

Oh, when the sea of life is dark,
  And waves begin to surge and roll,
In what safe ship may we embark
  To reconcile the troubled soul?
Kind words, my friends, will often warm
  A heart enveloped in a storm.

He knew her blustering would but last
  Just long enough to clear the sky;
And when the storm of tears was past
  He saw a rainbow in her eye,
With glinting sunshine on her brow,
  And both are very happy now.

DEATH OF THE IVY.

Oh mother, look here, all the ivy is dead,
And the snow and the frost they are spoiling
its bed!
It looks, oh, so barren, so cold and so sad,
When the bloom of the ivy is gone.

Last night in my bed, I was thinking of when
It would bloom in the smile of the summer
again;
Refreshed by the breezes, the sweet summer
rain,
And the smile of the heavenly sun.

But now when I look on the wreck of the vines
Which are tossed by the knavish and snow-
laden winds,
I feel, oh, so sad, and my heart it repines
To know that the ivy is gone.

Dear daughter, look there at that thin snowy
hair,
Which time has so frosted with trouble and care;
What soul would not sink to the depth of despair
When the bloom of life's mission is gone?

Last night I was thinking how we, at our play
In the days of our childhood, so happy and gay,
Would build airy castles, a glitt'ring array,
And talk of the work to be done.

But now when I look on those hopes which are
wrecked
By the winters of trouble, the frosts of neglect,
It makes my heart sad to sit down and reflect,
And know that life's mission is gone.

AFTER SUNSET.

The sunset light is crowning,
Faintly crowning,
The mountains in the west;
And the stars upon the breast
Of the east are growing lighter,
Growing thicker, growing brighter,
As the frowning
Of the night,
Trailing on the dying light,
Drives the sunlight, cold and gray,
From the snowy peaks away.

MOUNTAIN DAISIES.

I find them just below the hight,
Where in the breeze
The aspen trees
Cast sweet their checkered shade and light
Upon them list'ning to the bees.

There scattered thro' the waving grass,
With dewy spreads
Upon their beds,
They watch me as I come and pass,
With their sweet, clean, uplifted heads.

Here in this lonely mountain nook,
With sun-kissed ears
And dewy tears,
I love their quaint, inquiring look—
A perfect little herd of *dears*.

REMINISCENCES.

How sweet the day
  Which childhood knew,
When every way
  We wandered through
Led us to some enchanting view!

When every morn
  Was welcomed o'er
The bending corn,
  And thro' the door
Of childhood's happy home of yore.

When the advance
  Of night was met
Without a sense
  Of some regret
To linger when the sun was set.

Now as a dream
  Unharassed, free,
Each happy scene
  Comes back to me
Along the aisles of memory.

The twilight skies,
  All overcast

With starry eyes,
While in the west
The moon hung o'er the hilly crest.

The rainbow—set
By ev'ning's hand
Upon the wet
Cold cloud—which spanned
The rain-swept hills of prairie land.

The foggy morns
Which closed around
The stacks and barns
And garden ground,
And wept o'er every grassy mound.

The vicious hawks
That soared and squealed
O'er harvest shocks
Which lined the field,
Where "cluckie" with her brood concealed.

The whip-poor-will's
Sweet, plaintive note,
Which set the hills
And dales afloat
With echoes, lonely and remote.

The prairie groves,
With hazels green,
Which lined the coves
And each ravine
Where hiding brooks and pools were seen.

The tall, green trees,
Which waving free
Within the breeze,
Majestic'ly
Looked o'er the rolling prairie sea.

Now all are gone,
Those happy scenes;
Yet sweet upon
My mind convenes
The memories of those hills and streams.

Our mother's voice
At eventide,
When calling us
From meadows wide,
To gather at the fireside.

The fire-flies bright,
Fantastic gleam,
Throughout the night,
Above the stream,
As evanescent as a dream.

The reapers' song
In fields afar,
Which all day long,
With rhythmic jar
And pulsing music, filled the air.

The clearing wide,
Where oft we'd stray
To romp and hide
In boyish play,
Thro' all the long and sunny day.

The sumach tents
We built about
The shady fence,
Where in and out,
We bravely played the Indian scout.

The fires we made,
Whose dingy smoke
Mixed with the shade
Of spreading oak,
And o'er our leafy wigwams broke,

And filled our heads
With dreams as fair

As when the Reds
Were camping there,
Engulfed within the hazy air.

Now all are gone,
Those happy scenes,
Yet sweet upon
My mind convenes
Those tender reminiscent dreams.

FINALE.

Farewell, friends, but not forever;
We will wander once again
By the rapid rolling river;
In the quiet of the glen.

O'er the mountains and the meadows,
In the morning's early beam;
Thro' the silence of the shadows,
At the sunset's parting gleam.

Thro' the streets and in the the alleys;
On the prairie and the plain:
Thro' the groves and thro' the valleys,
We will wander once again.

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